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Message Text

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11
ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 SCA-01 L-02 H-02 SY-05

EB-07 /039 W
---------- 102823
R 291035Z APR 75
FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2847
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC (CONDERAS, GEORGE) SO
SUBJECT: CONTINUED DETENTION OF SHIP LORD BYRON,
PROTECTION OF PROPERTY (GEORGE CONDERAS,
AMERICAN CITIZEN)

REF: (A) ATHENS 8745 (NOTAL) (B) MOGADISCIO 1784 (NOTAL)

1. DURING RECENT VISIT TO MOGADISCIO OF GREEK AMBASSADOR TO KHARTOUM, EFTYCHIOS TZPHERIS, TO PRESENT HIS CREDENTIALS HERE, WE ASKED HIM WHAT PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE TO GAIN THE RELEASE OF THE GREEK FLAG SHIP LORD BYRON, WHICH THE SOMALIS HAVE HELD ILLEGALLY AT BERBERA SINCE 10 OCTOBER 1974. TZPHERIS SAID THAT WHEN HE SAW SIAD ON 10 APRIL, SIAD HAD FLATLY REFUSED TO RELEASE THE SHIP UNTIL THE GREEK GOVERNMENT REIMBURSED THE SOMALIS FOR THE SHORTFALL OF SUGAR, OR UNTIL THE GREEKS INTERCEDED WITH THE THAI GOVERNMENT TO MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE SEIZURE (FOR THE DEPARTMENT) AS FOLLOWS: THE SOMALI AGENCY FOR FOREIGN TRADE, CONTRACTED IN MARCH AND APRIL 1974, TO BUY 10,000 TONS OF SUGAR THROUGH INTERMEDIARIES RESIDENT IN MOMBASSA. THE SUGAR WAS TO BE FURNISHED BY THE COMMERCIAL ENTITY, THE AUSTRAILIA SEA HOLDING COMPANY, WITH HEAD OFFICES IN BANGKOK. (WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE SOMALIS WERE PARTICULARLY ATTRACTED BY PRICE OF SUGAR, WELL BELOW
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WORLD PRICES.) A LINE OF CREDIT WAS OPENED AND THE SUGAR

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WAS LOADED, ALLEGEDLY, ON A SHIP OF THE WEHNA SHIPPING COMPANY, THE DELWIND, AT BANGKOK ON 24 JUNE. A FEW DAYS LATER, ACCORDING TO LOCAL SOURCES, THE SOMALI AGENCY FOR FOREIGN TRADE WAS INFORMED THAT THE DELWIND HAD BEEN DAMAGED AT SEA AND THE CARGO WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE LORD BYRON. THE LORD BYRON, UNDER CHARTER OF A DUTCH COMPANY, ARRIVED AT BERBERA ON 10 OCTOBER 1974 WITH ONLY 600 TONSYBF SUGAR AND NO DOCUMENTATION. THE SOMALIS SEIZED THE SHIP AND HAVE HELD IT EVER SINCE, DESPITE GREEK AND DUTCH GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO OBTAIN ITS RELEASE. (A DUTCH DIPLOMAT FROMSIARTOUM, JAN BERTENS, VISITED SOMALIA IN LATE DECEMBER. HE MADE LITTLE PROGRESS.)

3. TZPHERIS TOLD US 12 APRIL THAT HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY HIS GOVERNMENT TO PERSONALLY REQUEST PRESIDENT SIAD TO RELEASE THE SHIP, AS THERE IS NO LEGAL BASIS TO HOLD IT, AND FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS. TZPHERIS SAID THAT WHILE AT FIRST THE CREW HAD BEEN ALLOWED OFF THE SHIP AT BERBERA, FOR THE LAST THREE MONTHS, THEY HAD BEEN RESTRICTED ON BOARD, ACCORDING TO TZPHERIS, ALLEGEDLY BECAUSE OF SOVIET ACTIVITY AT BERBERA. TZPHERIS SAID THAT THE EXTREME HEAT AT BERBERA (WELL OVER 115 DEGREES AT THIS TIME OF YEAR) AND DIFFICULTIES OF GETTING PROVISIONS NOW WERE CAUSING SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS ABOARD. A DOCTOR FROM A SOVIET WARSHIP AT BERBERA OCCASIONALLY TENDED THE CREW.

4. TZPHERIS, WHO HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY MET SIAD, TERMED HIM A BANDIT WHO CRUDE IN HIS OUTLOOK. SIAD DID NOT ACCEPT THE REASONING THAT THE SOMALIS COULD NOT HOLD EITHER THE GREEK OR THAI GOVERNMENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR A COMMERCIAL TRANSACTION WHICH CAME OUT BADLY FOR THE SOMALIS. TZPHERIS SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THE ONLY COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE TO RAISE THE ISSUE AT THE U.S., AND PUBLICIZE THE MATTER WIDELY. WE UNDERSTAND THAT VARIOUS LEGAL ACTIONS HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN TO OBTAIN THE RELEASE OF THE LORD BYRON, BUT WHETHER THE SOMALIS WILL RELEASE THE SHIP SOON REMAINS TO BE SEEN. PRESIDENT SIAD EXPRESSED HIS THOUGHTS ON THE MATTER TO A MOGADISCIO GATHERING IN LATE OCTOBER WHEN HE SAID THE LOSS OF SUGAR WAS DUE TO MACHINATIONS OF IMPERIALISTS WHO WERE SUBVERTING SOMALIA'S SOCIALIST REVOLUTION.

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5. WE WILL ADVISE FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.
HAMRICK

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NNN

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